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21 February 1952

Dear Matt:

This letter, which is in reply to yours of February 2 is, I believe, of sufficient importance to warrant my asking you to read it personally. I am making it as frank and as objective as I can.

You refer to two recent studies prepared within your headquarters, one of which analyzes the effectiveness of all the clandestine collection agencies operating within the Far East. It is apparent from your letter that these studies present a very dark picture of the clandestine intelligence effort in your area of command and indicate that all clandestine collection agencies operating in the Far East have failed so far to produce anything approaching adequate intelligence coverage.

I would be the first to agree that both the quantity and the quality of the intelligence produced by all sources and agencies in the Far East, including our own, is inadequate and I share your grave concern in this matter. Moreover, the effectiveness of clandestine intelligence operations is relatively low, not only in the Far East but as a matter of general application. Secret intelligence operations, no matter how capably conducted, cannot be relied upon to provide the solution of the intelligence problem. The contribution made by this effort is characteristically spotty, with occasional high points of extreme significance but in the main to be regarded distinctly as a supplementary effort. The experts do not differ widely in their statements as to the percentage of the total which can be expected to come by way of clandestine efforts; and currently we are finding that somewhat less than 10% of our total take of significant and valuable intelligence is originated by our covert intelligence activities. [redacted] 25X1

who have been in this business for centuries will admit, when pressed, that their average is at least as low and that the

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cost of producing secret intelligence, essential though it is, is disproportionately higher than other forms. As a matter of fact, however, our sustained and currently intensified efforts in the covert field have recently shown some very creditable results.

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I doubt if the identity of any of this information would be apparent either to you or to Van Fleet. All of the in-

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be in more complete agreement. I will not enlarge on the great difficulties which exist in this area. We have succeeded in establishing a modest penetration and are at present developing

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additional intelligence on which to base more extensive activities. You should remember in this connection that the small success so far achieved in that area became possible only after the removal of a series of inhibiting objections by the previous Far East Command, which was unwilling to risk the use of military support facilities. I hope for increasingly better results, but it is going to take time.

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I do not know whether you have been informed of these facts or of the over-all nature of the CIA intelligence mission. I am myself aware that there is a misapprehension on the part of many staff officers of your command on this latter point. It is natural that Army Intelligence Officers should be primarily concerned with tactical intelligence on enemy troop movements and close Order of Battle information, and that in their preoccupation with this type of material they either disregard or do not place a particularly high evaluation upon the broader form of strategic intelligence, even though it may be of important military significance. It is certain that most C-2 officers have little direct interest in political and economic intelligence of the kind which we are required by our charter and the demands of other important governmental customers to obtain. When the Central Intelligence Agency was in the process of being established, the C-2 Division of the War Department was in the front rank of those who insisted on excluding from the Central Intelligence Agency's charter any responsibility for the procurement of tactical or Order of Battle types of military intelligence. Munis is well aware of this, as he was then in C-2 and one of the strongest advocates of this policy which, I think, is the correct one.

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able to assess its present accuracy, it sounds a familiar note to me and I think it is worth your consideration, since it has some bearing on the over-all problem, and the final, balanced judgment is as important to you as it is to me.

Faithfully your friend,

SIGNED:

Walter B. Smith  
Director

General Matthew B. Ridgway  
Commander-in-Chief  
Far East Command

WBsmith/dr

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